General Assembly

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Fifty-sixth session
Agenda item 108

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly

[*on the report of the Third Committee (A/56/572)*]

56/116. United Nations Literacy Decade: education for all

The General Assembly,

Recalling that in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[1] the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights[2] and the Convention on the Rights of the Child[3] the right of every individual to education is recognized as inalienable,

Recalling also its resolutions 42/104 of 7 December 1987, by which it proclaimed 1990 as International Literacy Year, and 54/122 of 17 December 1999, in which it requested the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and Member States and with other relevant organizations and bodies, to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session a proposal for a United Nations literacy decade, with a draft plan of action and possible time frame for such a decade, on the basis of the outcome of the World Education Forum and the special session of the General Assembly for the five-year review of the World Summit for Social Development,

Reaffirming its resolution 49/184 of 23 December 1994, by which it proclaimed the ten-year period beginning on 1 January 1995 the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education and appealed to all Governments to intensify their efforts to eradicate illiteracy and to direct education towards the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Taking note of Commission on Human Rights resolution 2001/29 of 20 April 2001 on the right to education,[4]

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[1] Resolution 217 A (III).

[2] See resolution 2200 A (XXI), annex.

[3] Resolution 44/25, annex.

[4] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2001, Supplement No. 3* (E/2001/23), chap. II, sect. A.

Recalling the United Nations Millennium Declaration of 8 September 2000[5] in which Member States resolved to ensure that, by the year 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, would be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys would have equal access to all levels of education, which requires a renewed commitment to promote literacy for all,

Recalling also the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development[6] and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development[7] and the outcome document of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world",[8]

Convinced that literacy is crucial to the acquisition, by every child, youth and adult, of essential life skills that enable them to address the challenges they can face in life, and represents an essential step in basic education, which is an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century,

Affirming that the realization of the right to education, especially for girls, contributes to the eradication of poverty,

Acknowledging the activities undertaken at the national and regional levels for the Education for All 2000 assessment of progress towards achieving the goals of education for all, and stressing further the need to redouble efforts in order to meet the basic needs of people of all age groups, in particular girls and women,

Recognizing that, despite the significant progress in basic education, especially the increase in primary school enrolment coupled with a growing emphasis on the quality of education, major problems, both emerging and continuing, still persist, which require even more forceful and concerted action at the national and international levels so as to achieve the goal of education for all,

Deeply concerned about the persistence of the gender gap in education, which is reflected by the fact that nearly two thirds of the world's adult illiterates are women,

Urging Member States, in close partnership with international organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations, to promote the right to education for all and to create conditions for all for learning throughout life,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization entitled "Draft proposal and plan for a United Nations literacy decade";[9]

2. *Proclaims* the ten-year period beginning on 1 January 2003 the United Nations Literacy Decade;

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[5] See resolution 55/2.

[6] *Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6–12 March 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8), chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

[7] Ibid., annex II.

[8] Resolution S-24/2, annex.

[9] See A/56/114-E/2001/93 and Add.1.

3. *Reaffirms* the Dakar Framework for Action adopted at the World Education Forum,[10] in which commitments were made to achieve a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015 and to improve the quality of education;

4. *Appeals* to all Governments to redouble their efforts to achieve their own goals of education for all by developing national plans in accordance with the Dakar Framework for Action, setting firm targets and timetables, including gender-specific education targets and programmes, to eliminate gender disparities at all levels of education, to combat the illiteracy of women and girls and to ensure that girls and women have full and equal access to education, and by working in active partnership with communities, associations, the media and development agencies to reach those targets;

5. *Also appeals* to all Governments to reinforce political will and develop more inclusive policy-making environments and devise innovative strategies for reaching the poorest and most marginalized groups and for seeking alternative formal and non-formal approaches to learning with a view to achieving the goals of the Decade;

6. *Urges* all Governments to take the lead in the coordination of the Decade activities at the national level, bringing all relevant national actors together in sustained dialogue on policy formulation, implementation and evaluation of literacy efforts;

7. *Reaffirms* that literacy for all is at the heart of basic education for all and that creating literate environments and societies is essential for achieving the goals of eradicating poverty, reducing child mortality, curbing population growth, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy;

8. *Appeals* to all Governments and to economic and financial organizations and institutions, both national and international, to lend greater financial and material support to the efforts to increase literacy and achieve the goals of education for all and those of the Decade through, inter alia, the 20/20 initiative, as appropriate;

9. *Invites* Member States, the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system as well as relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to intensify further their efforts to implement effectively the World Declaration on Education for All,[11] the Dakar Framework for Action and the relevant commitments and recommendations to promote literacy made at recent major United Nations conferences and at their five-year reviews with a view to better coordinating their activities and increasing their contribution to development within the framework of the Decade in a manner that is complementary to and coordinated with the ongoing education for all process;

10. *Decides* that the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization should take a coordinating role in stimulating and catalysing the activities at the international level within the framework of the Decade;

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[10] See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, *Final Report of the World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 26–28 April 2000* (Paris, 2000).

[11] *Final Report of the World Conference on Education for All: Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien, Thailand, 5–9 March 1990*, Inter-Agency Commission (UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank) for the World Conference on Education for All, New York, 1990, appendix I.

11. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in cooperation with the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, to seek and take into account comments and proposals from Governments and the relevant international organizations on the draft plan for the Decade in order to develop and finalize a well targeted and action-oriented plan of action to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session;

12. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-seventh session a question entitled "United Nations Literacy Decade".

88th plenary meeting
19 December 2001